



Press Release

For Immediate Release
November 14, 2006

CONTACTS:

Brad Sherwood	Lisa Renton
Programs Specialist	Programs Specialist
(707) 521-6204	(707) 521-6206

North Coast Recommended to Receive \$25 Million for Water Management, Environmental Restoration Projects

***State Recommends \$25 Million for Integrated Regional Water Management Projects;
Additional Proposition 84 Funds are Anticipated***

Santa Rosa, CA – The Sonoma County Water Agency (Agency) announced today that \$25 million in state grant funding has been recommended to the North Coast from the 2004 water bond, Proposition 50 and an additional \$37 million will be allocated to the Region from the recently approved Proposition 84. The funding will be used for water supply reliability, clean water, water recycling, environmental restoration and fisheries, and watershed planning projects included within the North Coast Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (IRWMP).

On November 13, the California Department of Water Resources and the State Water Resources Control Board released its preliminary funding recommendations for the Integrated Regional Water Management Implementation Grant Program. Ranking first on the recommendation list is \$25 million for projects within the North Coast Integrated Regional Water Management Plan.

“The incentive provided by Proposition 50 funding has led to regional planning efforts throughout the state that will help to improve water supplies, water quality, and the natural environment of California,” said John Woodling, Chief, Conjunctive Water Management Branch, California Department of Water Resources. “The North Coast integrated regional plan is an extraordinary effort to bring together interests from a large and diverse area for mutual benefit. It effectively incorporates the water management approaches we are trying to encourage in California.”

The plan was developed by a consortium of cities, counties, tribes, non-governmental organizations, watershed groups and interested stakeholders from the counties of Del Norte, Siskiyou, Modoc, Humboldt, Trinity, Mendocino and Sonoma. The coalition has spent the last three years working to create the comprehensive plan that will enhance the beneficial uses of water, recover salmonid populations and promote intra-regional cooperation throughout the North Coast Region.

“This regional plan is the product of a tremendously dedicated team of representatives from seven northern counties. They shared their knowledge and energy to create one of the most encompassing water-related documents in the State.” said Humboldt County Supervisor and Chair of the North Coast IRWMP Policy Review Panel Jimmy Smith.

Jake Mackenzie, Vice Chair of the North Coast IRWMP Policy Review Panel and Councilmember for the City of Rohnert Park added, "The North Coast IRWMP team is deeply honored to be the top ranked application in the State. We feel that this is the result of the combined efforts and extraordinary commitment of our Technical Peer Review Committee, support staff, project proponents, stakeholders and Policy Review Panel."

The Agency initiated the effort to prepare an IRWM plan for the North Coast Region. The Agency Board of Directors funded the initial development of the plan and directed staff to work with a network of agencies in seven counties to reach consensus on the funding priorities for the region.

"The \$25 million received for the North Coast IRWMP is monumental for the Agency and the North Coast," said Paul Kelley, Chairman of the Sonoma County Water Agency Board of Directors. "Receiving this funding demonstrates the importance of regional cooperation and the commitment of the Agency and the North Coast to work together to for the sustainable management of our natural resources."

Local projects benefiting from funding include: upgrades to the Graton wastewater treatment facility; the construction of new sewer collection, treatment and disposal for the community of Monte Rio; habitat restoration and enhancement for seven federally-protected salmon, steelhead and plant species through the implementation of Sonoma County's Water Recycling and Habitat Preservation Project; and the development of a watershed management plan for the Russian River.

Catherine Kuhlman, Executive Officer of the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board said, "The IRWMP process has been phenomenal. The North Coast projects put together from participants from Modoc to Sonoma will have an incredible and positive effect on our waterways."

Development of the plan also enabled several North Coast communities to secure funding through other state grant programs. Taken together, funding from Propositions 40 and 50 will total some \$38 million. Proposition 84, approved by the voters on November 7th, will add an additional \$37 million in funding for North Coast Regional Plan projects and up to \$45 million for restoration of coastal salmon and steelhead populations.

David Lewis, Chair of the North Coast IRWMP's Technical Peer Review Committee and Watershed Management Advisor for the University of California Cooperative Extension stated, "This grant award will be a wonderful extrinsic acknowledgement of our effort and needed boost to our regional capacity. What should not be overlooked, however, is the intrinsic value that our process has had in increasing our capacity and understanding to do regional water resource planning. The willingness of project proponents and the Region's Policy Review Panel and committee members to identify and develop a plan to address shared project and county issues made this possible. This plan and our motivation to implement it is a benefit derived from the process that matches in value the grant support we stand to receive."

For more information regarding the North Coast's Integrated Regional Water Management Planning effort please visit www.northcoastirwmp.net.

###

Sonoma County Water Agency provides water supply, flood protection and sanitation services for portions of Sonoma and Marin counties. Visit us on the Web at www.sonomacountywater.org.